

horseback in direction of the Ramasine Hills, Hildebrand and Demosthenes following at a long distance, they beheld something occur which caused Brand to cry:

"Ride home, Moss; call Perlice, Mas'r, Missus. They hung Mas'r Tom! Hung him. Gar! Gar! They hung him! De Lacy Lillymere fighting them all, have cut Mas'r Tom's rope round him neck, took him down. They's killing De Lacy Lillymere, and hung Tom again! Ride home, Moss, shout 'murder! murder!' bring Perlice, everybody!"

"What you wait for, 'Mosthenes? Get to home, fast; bring help," he continued.

"What yourself wait for, 'Debrand? Get to yond crowd, ride 'em down; ride over 'em, give help."

And at once Brand rode at the crowd; with boldness and impetuosity of charge, such as might have gained knighthood and renown in other ages, in other lands, had he lived then and been, not a negro.

Demosthenes also felt the impulse to ride at the crowd and give help, as suggested to Brand, though Tom Inkle was often a harsh master, and not likely to thank them for any help. The impulse came in part from combativeness in the young negro, conjoined with some natural generosity and much dutiful devotion to Tom's mother; one of the most indulgent mistresses who ever held coloured servants at command.

Turning his thoughts to where duty lay Moss wheeled his steed, giving the fleet-footed creature rein, making fast time to Rama, where sound of galloping hoofs brought storemen to the doors, women to the windows. Halting, not many minutes, at the Mayor's private office, he screamed:

"Mas'r Ramasine, they's hanging young Mas'r Inkle to a tree; murdering De Lacy Lillymere."

"Who is doing that?" demanded the Mayor. "Who, who?" at the same instant, cried Captain Clapper Hayvern, then visiting at Rama.

"The gold loafers, as have come crowding out of all the earth for gold and don't get none. They's hanging Mas'r Tom 'cause of selling claims there's no money in. Lestways I think that may be what it is for. And murdering young Lord Lillymere for helping to save Tom. Captain and everybody, go ride, run, and help! Use off for Mas'r, Missus, Perlice, fire brigade, Conway volunteers."

And fast, on the road of nine miles, Demosthenes speeded away.

"Jericho!" shouted Clapper Hayvern. "My cutlass, boarding pike, barkers! You take the Riot Act, Mayor Ramasine."

The Mayor in turn called to Larriker, blacksmiths, stablemen, all hands:

"Harness teams; hitch to light waggons; call every man of the volunteers. Hurry in rifles, belts, pouches; I'll distribute cartridges. No, Tibby, dear girl; you'd best stay at home."

"What for should I, Ramasine? And you going forth to battle with the offscourings of the four corners of the world?"

"Bide at home, Tibby; be Mayoress in my absence. You may have to defend Rama. Gather in the neighbours and take counsel of them, if occasion arise."

"I go with you, Ramasine. Where you read the Riot Act, I read the Riot Act. Where my brother, Clapper, boards with cutlass, pike, and barkers, I board with cutlass, pike, and barkers. The Evil One's own sweepings of creation come among us! Time they were faced and fought by honest folk."

"Tibby, I cannot listen to this, nor permit it. You to accompany us into, who knows what kind of skrimages! It might be a calamity of life-long dool and woe, considering the way you are."

"The way I am! The more becoming I should go forth in armour, conflict, trial, triumph."

"Tibby, it isn't so long since you apprehended the end of the world at every small trouble; now you're like to run gyte the other way."

"I was then unmarried. Now I'm a married woman; many things look different to a woman when married. Your mother, Ramasine, has taught by example what noble purposes life has for all of us, if we'd perform duties as they arise. She performs duties as they arise."

"Tibby, I must urge with all a husband's love and authority, that you this day stay at home. What has come over you? And in that tender condition too? Think of possible consequences, my darling."

"I do think of consequences, Ramasine. Canada may have need of heroes in the future. The mother of the great Napoleon was in my condition, when following with her husband the fortunes of war with Paoli. Hence the birth of a hero. History has no lessons if we refuse seeing them. The unborn babe shall have the advantage of events now occurring. Who may tell, Ramasine, what our son may rise to?"

"Who may tell it will be a son? But if this be the purpose of the advantage, my own heroine, you shall be indulged. Only keep in the waggon, not to be trodden down in a crowd."

"I go with Clapper Hayvern and you, Mr. Mayor, wherever that may be."

"So be it Tibby; get in the waggon with the ammunition and our select body guard."

Thus the Ramasine party drove off, seeking the scene of gold field riot. The Mayor reading, word by word, the Riot Act as they proceeded; Captain Hayvern testing by touches, first with one thumb, then with the other, the edge of his cutlass; looking to the barkers, so termed when he last served in a man-of-war; and shaking his boarding pike to prove muscle and elasticity.

Arrived at Conway, Demosthenes continued his fast pace through the streets. The noble steed panting swathed in foam; himself so nearly breathless as to be able only to murmur at the house door when opened by a maid servant, for he dared not go to the bank:

"May be dead, hung dead on de tree by now. Tell Missus, I'se a'most dead riding."

"Mistress is not at home; what has happened to Hildebrand?"

"Hung on trees; not 'Debrand, Mas'r Tom."

"You're drunk, Moss; serve you right if Mas'r Tom would come with a horsewhip, laying it well on, as he has done before. Be off to the stable!"

So saying, Betty closed the door. The mistress being from home, the maids felt at liberty to be severe or spiteful. Telling cook and others in the kitchen what 'Mosthenes had said, three parts intoxicated, as falsely alleged, Betty concluded with:

"Good thing an' they was both hung, the niggers. Missus makes more ado about them two blackamoors than all the Christians under this roof."

"But she be also good to the Christians," rejoined the cook. "I'd have patience and listen to what poor Moss has to say. Go again to the door, Betty."

"Indeed I'll not," she cried, and staid where she was. Five other maids remained where they were, it not being their "place" to answer the door or attend to wants of another servant, lest of all one of the niggers.

Demosthenes put the panting steed in stable, then with faltering step, his brain confused and dizzy, approached the bank entrance to make sign to a clerk to come forth and speak. Old Mr Inkle observed him peering in, and told a clerk to go and drive that nigger away.

"Whip him away, Weston; or cane him. I've already ordered that neither of the two nuisances are to be permitted near the bank on any pretence whatever."

Which order Mr. Weston, with a cane, promptly proceeded to execute; but ere he reached the lobby Demosthenes had fled.

By the garden wall where street and back lane joined, Moss, in frenzy of despair—gazing to the sky, cried:

"Fire! fire! Mas'r Tom hung! None to hear! No one to help! Fire! Fire!" And tore at his woolly hair, stamping the feet, writhing in very agony of distress.

Hearing and seeing which, the occupier of a store nearest to the signal box forty-three, who, with the constable of the beat, held a key, rushed out, opened the iron box, pulled down the hook and let go. Electrically the number went to the Town Hall; from thence to church towers and the several fire divisions. Everybody hearing the bells ring one, two, three, four; one, two, three, said forty-three, Inkle's bank.

Horses standing harnessed were attached to wheeled vehicles with reeled up hose. The firemen, at duty ever ready, sprang to seats, and galloped off to box forty-three, learning from him who gave the alarm that it was given because one of Inkle's niggers came out tearing his hair, calling fire! fire!

Constables and firemen entered the bank to find Inkle angry at the false alarm. Demosthenes, by order, was conducted to the police cells and locked up as a maniac. The constable reporting that the nigger raved about somebody hung on a tree, but gave no coherent information.

Going into the dark cell the negro turned, beseeching the man on duty to listen, but he gave a cowardly kick, hurling the prisoner in headlong, as many another, male, female, guilty, not guilty, had been before, in accordance with police cell usage the world over. Then locked the grinding bars, saying:

"Got one of them pampered niggers of Mrs. Inkle's in the cells at last. Expected a long time we should; cusses of creation! What was blacks made for, anyhow?"

Hearing the alarm forty-three, Mrs. Inkle hastened home to ascertain what new disaster had occurred. Told that Demosthenes had come home, galloping on horseback alone, either intoxicated or a maniac, and was now in the police cells, and that he had caused the false alarm, she ordered the state carriage to be got ready with horses attached for a journey. By intuition Mrs. Inkle felt a catastrophe had occurred to some one; to her son, or the other coloured servant, or both. Then taking a street coach, drove to the police station.

Soon she knew all, and had Demosthenes at her side, driving home. Directing him to be ready to accompany the carriage in livery, Tilda entered the bank with step of imperial passion, advancing direct to Inkle's private room; opening the door without monition, as never before; and closing it behind her.

"A mercy o' me, Tilda! Hast thou gone mad as well as t' young nigger, Brand?"

"Thomas Inkle, wickedest man on this side perdition! Your doom has to-day begun. And with it mine. Our son is murdered, lynch-lawed, hung on a tree; as thou art like to be hung before morning, and as I may be immolated before night. Victims, all of us, demanded by the eternal balances of right and wrong, outraged in bargains of Inkle."

"Woman! what accursed blasphemy is this you utter? Out on thee for a liar! What is it? Tom hanged! Lynch-lawed! Tilda, do we sleep? Do you speak in sleep? Is this a dream? Is it death? Damnation, woman, what have you said? My head! My head! My son! Tom! what of poor Tom? I—"

Saying which, the man extended his arms, falling prone on the floor, face down; in agony convulsed. Less affected by the words of Tilda, terrible though they were, than by the passions conflicting within her, and glowing on him from every pore of the skin.

Inkle regained consciousness after a time of foaming at the mouth and rigidity of limb. In about twenty minutes he was calm enough to listen to the negro servant, called into the private office to rehearse all he knew.

"I go on horseback at once, and fast too; thou may come with the carriage as far as Rama."

"Tommy, darling, hadn't thou best stay and be safe here?"

"What! and son be sacrificed? and wife may be attacked? Perish all the gold I've gathered if Thomas Inkle hides his head with wife and son exposed. Poor Tom! Poor Tom! I'll bring him home alive and well, or—some one gets a bill to pay for which money will never be coined. I'm off, and well armed, Tilda. Consult with the cashier before thou comes away. Satterby'll arrange to defend the bank if attacked. Bring Mr. Gryud and all constables they may spare from duty here. Come no farther than Rama, Tilda, dear. Thou'll be safer there."

"One moment, dear Thomas; close the door. Oh, this wringing of the heart of your poor Tilda! There! Good bye. Don't use firearms, Tom."

"Not short of being at last chance of life, Tilda; but if I mun fight, I'se fight. Poor Tom! Poor Tom!"

He departed, riding fast. None in the street who saw him knowing on what errand he went. Soon after, Tilda went in the carriage; the Chief of police and constables in other carriages. And now people talked.

"A gold robbery, no doubt."

That was the general remark.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE BATTLE—THE CATASTROPHE—A LONE GRAVE ON THE HILL OPENED, AND WHAT DO THEY SEE?

The excitements of the chase have been told and sung often. The sensations of being chased not often. It seldom falls to a fox to have the best of the sport. To be found, pursued, overtaken, considerably worried, then to escape and see hounds at fault, hunters in trouble, the pack and field in a river, in a fix.

Such a fox after the day's run, if not too much worried, would set the table in a row at dinner with his—story.

Such a fox was not Thomas Inkle, the younger. He had been too hotly pursued to be merry at the end of the day. Whether he had the best or worst of the chase is for you to run on with me and discover.

In the morning he rode from Conway, as already told, followed at a distance by the two coloured grooms, as well mounted as himself. Before they were out of town he overheard, from an upper window, the painful sounds, "Anna Liffey." And from a street corner, "Who murdered Anna Liffey?" From behind a rail fence and thicket of bramble at four miles out, a voice screamed, "Anna Liffey's ruffian lover! Seize the villain!"

At Rama Rapids the gushing river seemed to have voices mingling in the flood, and the roar of waters, crying as he passed, "What have you done with Anna Liffey?"

Trotting rather fast through Rama town, lately known as The Corners, the few people whom he met glared up, scowling.

Tom knew he was innocent of Anna's death, or of any harm to her, and was resolute to face everybody, anywhere in assertion of his innocence. Yet, circumstantial assumptions were against him. The luxuries of lynching and kn-kluxing are enjoyed this day, as old country mobbing was long before, on human foxes, panthers, hares, mice, with no stronger presumption of guilt, often with fainter signs of it, than attached to young Inkle in respect of Anna Liffey.

Approaching the Redwald farm where strangers had gathered in groups talking of gold, of assays of ore alleged by some to have been made with rich results, by others denied, mutterings arose. At first indistinctly, then in words distinct enough.

"Inkle, your father has sold claims alleged to be rich in gold, which tested are barren. It is a swindle. If the young woman found nuggets bring her to show where."

"He cannot bring her to show where. Miss Liffey knew it to be a swindle and was likely to expose both father and son; they paid her to go away."

"Paid her to go away! They killed her. They put her body in lime and sulphuric acid to destroy it. The bones of the young creature and clothes were found in a cellar under the bank next the garden. Poor men would have been hanged for the murder. They are rich and subvert justice. Serve them right to go in a body and tear the Inkle bank down."

"Or blow it up."

"Burn it to the ground."

"See the old world, worn-out institutions in this Canada, with its monarchy! Murderers going at large. Riding in our face here, bold as innocence. Out West, or down South, they'd been lynched right off."

"That is so; and would be lynched now with opportunity offering."

"Say Inkle? What have you to urge, or explain, or confess? What do you say why the gentlemen here shouldn't have you off that horse, and tried by a jury?"

To which Inkle rejoined:

"None of the gentlemen dare lay a finger on horse or me; it might be dangerous. But if you have grievances of a business nature with my father, I'll do my best to obtain redress. Some of the claims yield gold beyond a doubt, and all may when crushing mills are erected."

"What about Anna Liffey? That is first to be explained. Whose bones and clothes had you in the cellar?"

"Gentlemen, all the authorities from constable to Attorney-General, know about the bones; that they were purchased for scientific purposes by a medical student, and by me from the student. I'm at hand any time to answer about the bones. And will also do my best to settle your land lots and claims equitably. I want now to know what this is going on along the concession road. Stealing the Ized Bold Institute? Conveying away the church on rollers! Bless if they aren't."

And with those words spoken in a tone of mingled wonder and humour, Tom rode off at a canter to see who was stealing the spacious wooden structure. It had been variously known as Temple of the Sun, Ized Bold Institute.

A brief conversation between Renshaw, the Conway gaoler, and DeLacy Lillymere, may unfold the meaning of names in this special locality.

Renshaw, as you know, came an early settler to the township, but did not settle on his lot—that on which the factories in the suburb of Steelyard's Mills were now built. He was informed that to-day Tabitha Redwald, from whom the golden nugget farm was named, would cause the lone grave of her son to be opened, that she might remove the boy's ashes from land now invaded by rude gold diggers; the farm no longer hers. He came as an old friend to assist and sympathize: Lillymere accompanying him, irresistibly fascinated with Renshaw's story of the Redwald and the boy Zoroaster.

"The Redwald" said Renshaw, "is a tall, thin, muscular woman. She was left on the two lots of two hundred acres each, when all a bush, to manage as best she might with help of her child Zoroaster. She and Ized Bold, the husband, were Iconoclasts in Lancashire. They believed in matter only; the noon-day sun the only Deity. They expected to establish a social community, and got men to help on promise of copartnership. But when men found their labour bring no wages, Ized being still sole boss, not working, nor intending to work, but only lecturing them on the beauty and harmony of co-operation in log-rolling, they went to land of their own, each for himself."

Ized Bold departed to the States and remained away years.

"The Redwald, such the designation of his wife in her maiden time in England, was a poetess; a woman of fervent, passionate nature, who had almost adored Ized for his grand conceptions of what the social world should be; and what they expected it would be when some revolution was accomplished in England, overturning monarchy, church, all churches and established institutions."

"Their child, Zoroaster, was dedicated to be High Priest of the Temple of the Sun, intended first to be built at the place called Irlam-on-the-Heights at Manchester."

"Left in the bush alone Tabitha Redwald and this boy cultured as much ground as gave them a living. At fifteen years old, Zoroaster, one of the prettiest, most handsome youths the human eye ever looked upon, tenderest, loving sons a mother ever doted on, took sick and pined. The eager, loving nature of the boy had induced him to overtask his immature strength."

"A falling tree broke one of his limbs at the ankle. It was set well and healed, but the boy pined."

"He was like to die, and said: 'mother, the religion of nature you call beautiful, and exalting, by which my body is to grow to leaves and flowers when I die, seems poor beside the hope of the Christians whom you and father despise. I wish I were a Christian, to be other than leaves to a maple tree. Oh, mother! that the life within, which is a thing